

Cot short – the state of the capital's neonatal units

Each year around 11,000 babies are admitted to one of the capital's neonatal units. Hospitals in London regularly operate above the recommended level of cot occupancy, increasing the risk of infections spreading and leaving staff under pressure.

A report by the London Assembly has found that cot shortages led to a number of babies being transferred to another hospital as soon as they were born – sometimes over long distances. Members of the Assembly's Health and Public Services Committee heard that one hospital had to transfer 40% of babies last year.

Joanne McCartney AM, chair of the committee, said: "Giving birth is a joyous occasion and it should not be overshadowed by worrying where your baby will be transferred to, should complications arise. London should be able to adequately care for its babies."

The report said understaffing is adding to the problem; three hospitals had to close neonatal cots because they did not have enough staff. It has been suggested that 500 extra neonatal nurses are needed in the capital.

The report warned that extra cots would only help reduce capacity problems when accompanied by a significant investment in staffing.

Recommendations included:

- Units with staff retention problems should offer more flexible working policies and personal development opportunities
- London's five Neonatal Networks should consider how they can improve joint working.

Despite the difficulties facing London, the Committee found neonatal care services are coping admirably with the increasing pressure put upon them.

Neonatal Nurse & Midwife Educational Sponsorship

Dräger Medical UK is pleased to announce it will be sponsoring the Neonatal Nurse & Midwife Educational Scholarship on behalf of the NNA SIEG (NNA Special Interest Education Group). This scholarship will make funding available towards neonatal education based activities, including study course fees, areas of interest, practice development, conference fees and travel.

For details and electronic application form go to www.nna.org.uk or email bernadette.henderson@luton.ac.uk.

Worried parents can refer to child development factsheet

Concerned about your child? has been produced by national charity Contact a Family to encourage parents who are worried about their child's development to seek medical advice.

Written in association with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and designed for healthcare professionals to give to parents, the factsheet covers the key areas of child development, outlines the initial steps worried parents can take and gives details of specialists and organisations who may become involved later.

Each key area – including behaviour, learning difficulties and feeding and eating – is covered in its own short section, so parents can read as much, or as little, as they need.

Paul Soames, Contact a Family director of UK operations, said: "We hope that GPs, health visitors and nurses will find this a useful resource in their work with families and that it will help parents navigate the system and access the services they need."

Rotavirus gastroenteritis vaccine moves a step closer

European data, announced at the 24th annual meeting of the European Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases, demonstrate that Rotarix™, the first oral rotavirus vaccine licensed in the UK, prevents 100% of hospitalisations due to rotavirus-induced gastroenteritis and 75% of hospitalisations due to gastroenteritis of any cause. Each year in England and Wales, 18,000 infants are hospitalised due to rotavirus gastroenteritis.

Professor Adam Finn, David Baum Professor of Paediatrics at the University of

contact a family
Working with The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

concerned about your child?



Copies are free to childcare professionals at www.cafamily.org.uk/paptinfo.html, tel: 020 7608 8773, email: Sheila.Davies@cafamily.org.uk.

Bristol, commented: "Rotavirus gastroenteritis causes a lot of misery in young children and enormous expense and inconvenience for parents and for hospitals admitting children throughout the UK every year. We now have a tool with which it can be prevented."

Further evidence was provided that Rotarix can be safely co-administered with other routine childhood vaccinations, including the conjugated meningococcal C and pneumococcal vaccines, without impairing the immune response of the co-administered antigens.

Rotarix is a two-dose oral vaccine that can be administered at approximately two and three months of age to offer early protection against rotavirus gastroenteritis before the peak incidence of disease at 6-24 months of age.

Rotarix manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline is currently engaged in discussions with government health authorities on rotavirus vaccination and the requirements for the UK. In the meantime, the vaccine is licensed and available for prescription.

Child-focused HIV treatment is still not being delivered

Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision and others have come together to rally for child-focused treatment, research and investment to treat more HIV-positive children.

The Global Movement for Children (GMC) issued an urgent appeal for the international community to recognise that children with HIV and AIDS have a right to treatment to save their lives and beat the epidemic, stating that only one child in twenty who needs HIV treatment receives it.

The GMC's report, *Saving Lives: Children's right to HIV and AIDS treatment*, reveals that despite an urgent need for paediatric treatment, alarmingly few drugs are available in formulations that are affordable and able to be administered to children, while the development of new drugs continues to focus mainly on adults.

The report also calls for specific steps, including:

- Develop and make available simple and affordable diagnostic tests.
- Increase research and development for child-specific treatment.
- Improve healthcare systems of developing countries to upgrade drug delivery systems.

www.gmfc.org

RIGHT: Ninety per cent of HIV-positive children are infected by a failure to prevent mother-to-child transmission (MTCT). Evidence shows that providing a full range of MTCT services can reduce the risk of transmission to less than two per cent.



Photo courtesy of UNICEF

Non-medical prescribing e-learning tool

Three SHAs in north west England have collaborated with local universities to develop an award-winning e-learning tool to train nurses as non-medical prescribers.

Legislative changes to expand nurse prescribing and introduce pharmacist independent prescribing came into force in May. Before they can practice, prescribers must undergo 26 days of theoretical learning and 12 days of supervised practice with a designated medical practitioner. The e-learning tool means staff can receive this tuition flexibly and at their own pace.

Samantha Sherrington, non-medical prescribing project manager at Greater Manchester SHA, said: "The non-medical prescribing leads at Greater Manchester, Cheshire & Merseyside, and Cumbria and Lancashire SHAs realised that the NHS organisations in the region needed a

flexible and interactive learning package. This tool increases access, especially for practitioners in remote locations, while delivery high-quality tuition."

The learning material incorporates video scenarios and web-based assignments.

The tool has been named 'best internal multimedia computer-based programme to train, inform or educate people.'

Email: sam.sherrington@bolton.nhs.uk
Department of Health CNO Bulletin, May 06.
www.dh.gov.uk/cnobulletin

Overseas nurses experience everyday discrimination

Research by Dr John Aggergaard Larsen, research fellow at the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Surrey, suggests that overseas-trained nurses working in the UK experience racist discrimination occurring in everyday interaction. The research, based on in-depth interviews across England and Wales, reveals that this can have severe consequences for the well-being of nurses as it can impede their career development chances.

The research showed that some overseas nurses react by retracting from their

previous career ambitions and instead concentrate on their family lives. Some successful overseas nurses have, in contrast, actively sought to overcome difficult social situations through a self-imposed 'blindness' to the discrimination and a strong social skill to re-negotiate their social role, often through humour.

Apart from disadvantaging migrant workers, this discrimination can mean that valuable skills are lost. Employers and managers are urged to pay more attention to support migrant workers and put a stop to everyday discrimination.

FSID campaign tackles plagiocephaly concerns

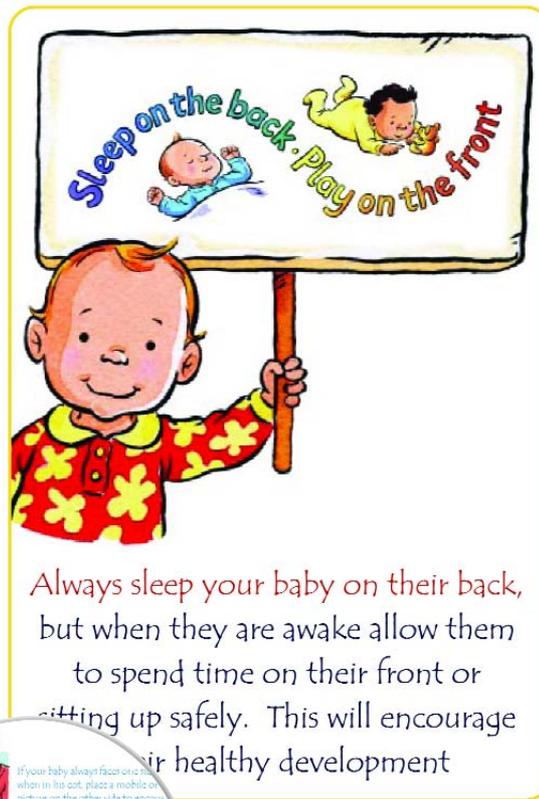
A survey from the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths reveals that 21% of mothers do not always place young babies down to sleep on their back, whereas six years ago there was a suggestion that only 10% of babies were not routinely sleeping on the back.

Parents may be avoiding back sleeping because of increasing publicity about “flat head syndrome” or plagiocephaly, a cosmetic condition which usually corrects itself within a year and may be avoided if parents give the baby plenty of awake time on the front or sitting up.

The survey also found that parents are not giving their babies much time playing on their front or sitting up, with only 22% of mothers regularly giving their babies time to play on the front.

A leaflet produced by FSID, “*Sleep on the back, play on the front*”, highlights the key safety message to parents that they must continue to sleep their babies on the back in order to reduce the risk of cot death, while explaining the importance of supervised front play and giving tips for ‘tummy time’ activities.

Clare Jolly, health visitor advisor to FSID, said: “Although flat head syndrome



does not do any medical harm, parents are naturally anxious and we need to let mums and dads know that they do not need expensive treatment or special devices – they just need to follow the advice in FSID’s new leaflet.”

Leaflet available from tel: 020 7233 2090, email: helpline@sids.org.uk, www.sids.org.uk

New framework for nurses’ careers

The Royal College of Nursing, working in conjunction with Skills for Health, has published guidelines to help nurses plan their career and link their development to specialist areas of work.

The Core Career and Competency Framework shows how the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework applies to different career stages in nursing. It aims to help nurses meet the expected levels for career progression in the remit of Agenda for Change, and to identify the knowledge and skills needed for specific practice areas.

Department of Health CNO Bulletin, Apr 06. www.dh.gov.uk/cnobulletin

Training in use of infusion devices

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) and the NHS Core Learning Programme Unit have launched a nationally-accredited training programme in the safe use of infusion devices.

It aims to improve knowledge after an NPSA study found that staff sometimes made mistakes because they were unfamiliar with devices and also highlighted the need for a transferable, nationally-recognised qualification.

The programme uses a combination of e-learning, practical one-to-one tuition and skills assessment. The number of modules taken will depend upon the clinician’s existing skills. It was successfully piloted in 16 NHS organisations in 2005.

Department of Health CNO Bulletin, Mar 06. www.dh.gov.uk/cnobulletin

Open day at Winnicott

The Winnicott Baby Unit at St Mary’s, Paddington, will be holding an open day on July 27, 9.30-12.30 and 13.30-16.30.

Arranged in response to requests from nurses and therapists who were interested in the unit’s experiences in developmental care, the day will involve a tour of the unit and a wide variety of staff members will be on hand to share experiences and answer questions.

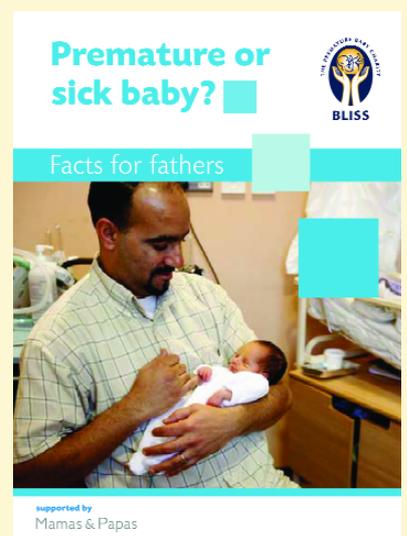
See the Conference Planner on pages 164-165 for more information.

BLISS announces new resources for fathers

The premature baby charity BLISS has launched two new services for fathers. Dads who want to chat to each other about any issues related to having a premature or sick baby can access a confidential dads’ forum on the BLISS message board.

Premature or sick baby? Facts for fathers looks at the important role fathers play in the care of their premature or sick baby.

It covers a wide range of practical and emotional issues, such as feeling left out, dealing with stress, communicating with staff, getting more involved in care, feeding and nappy changing, looking after other children at home, dealing with work, paternity rights and benefits. Dads will also find a handy ‘tool kit’ on where to buy practical items and get help.



Dads’ Forum: www.blissmessageboard.org.uk/
Visit the What’s New section at www.bliss.org.uk to download a pdf or order a printed version of the leaflet.